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IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL
PEACE AND SECURITY

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-sixth year

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 45/12, which was adopted without a vote on 7 November 1990. In that resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to keep Member States and the Security Council informed of progress towards the implementation of the resolution and to submit to the Assembly at its forty-sixth session a report on the situation in Afghanistan and on progress achieved in the implementation of the Agreements on the Settlement of the Situation Relating to Afghanistan, 1/ concluded at Geneva on 14 April 1988 (hereafter referred to as the Geneva Accords), and the political settlement relating to Afghanistan.

2. I have reported regularly to the General Assembly and the Security Council on the progress in the implementation of the Geneva Accords and the political settlement relating to Afghanistan (A/43/720-S/20230, A/44/661-S/20911, S/20465 and A/45/635-S/21879).

3. In paragraph 9 of its resolution 45/12, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative to continue to encourage and facilitate the early realization of a comprehensive settlement in Afghanistan in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Accords and of the resolution.

A. The Office of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan

4. The Office of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Pakistan (OSGAP), which I established on 15 March 1990, assists me in my efforts towards a comprehensive political settlement in Afghanistan. It is headed by my Personal Representative in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Mr. Benon Sevan. It is organized into two small headquarters units: one in Islamabad, with a suboffice in Peshawar, and one in Kabul.

5. The Military Advisory Unit of OSGAP, comprised of 10 military advisers, one each from Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Fiji, Ghana, Ireland, Nepal, Poland and Sweden, provides the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General with the military advice required to assist him in the implementation of the responsibilities entrusted to the Secretary-General. The military officers serving as military advisers are detached temporarily, with the concurrence of their respective Governments, from existing United Nations operations, namely, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The Military Advisory Unit is responsible for providing military expertise, as required; maintaining a continued assessment of the security situation in Afghanistan; and elaborating and updating plans for military support to a possible increased future United Nations involvement in Afghanistan. The military advisers are organized into two small units in Islamabad and Kabul, with some of them rotating between Islamabad and Peshawar. The organizational arrangements for OSGAP are essential for remaining in constant touch with all segments of the Afghan society and being kept informed of the complex political and military reality if my mandate is to be carried out.

6. I would like to express my appreciation to the two host Governments, namely, the Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, for their support and cooperation as well as for providing the necessary assistance in ensuring the security and safety of OSGAP and other United Nations personnel. I also wish to express my appreciation to the two Guarantor Governments, namely the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Government of the United States of America, as well as all other Governments for their continued support and cooperation. In addition I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Governments that have been providing military advisers to OSGAP. I also thank the civilian staff and military advisers of OSGAP for their outstanding performance under very difficult conditions.

B. Voluntary return of the refugees

7. With regard to the implementation of the third instrument of the Geneva Accords, namely, the Bilateral Agreement between the Republic of Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the Voluntary Return of Refugees, OSGAP cooperated closely with the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The differences between the two parties to the Accords regarding the interpretation of article IV of the third instrument have continued to prevent the establishment of the mixed commissions envisaged therein.

8. Although it has not yet been possible to establish the formal mechanism envisaged in the Geneva Accords, UNHCR, in close cooperation with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes Relating to Afghanistan (UNOCA) has continued to support the voluntary return of refugees who continue to repatriate despite the unsettled conditions in their country. The voluntary repatriation project, which commenced in July 1990 on an experimental basis, has been continued and expanded during 1991. By the end of September 1991, some 34,000 families, representing about 170,000 individuals, had exchanged their ration books for cash and wheat given to subsidize their return to Afghanistan.

9. Increased monitoring in the refugee camps, at the borders, and to the extent possible, inside Afghanistan confirms that a substantial number of the refugees receiving repatriation grants are indeed returning permanently to Afghanistan. Depending on the availability of funds, UNHCR plans to continue the project through 1992. Throughout 1991 UNHCR, in cooperation with WFP, has also provided food and transportation to an estimated 30,000 of the 62,000 Afghans who chose to return through transit hostels located in Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kabul and Jalalabad. Although most returnees are expected to continue to make their own transportation arrangements, experience has shown the usefulness of these hostels and subsidized commercial transport for families travelling long distances through unfamiliar and often dangerous regions. UNHCR plans to extend assistance to another six to eight hostels located on major transportation routes in anticipation of increased numbers of returnees during 1992.

10. The voluntary and safe return of the refugees is of critical importance in the context of a peaceful solution to the Afghanistan problem. However, until conditions allow them to repatriate in safety or until the circumstances that led them to become refugees cease to exist, UNHCR considers that those who elect not to repatriate must continue to receive international protection and assistance in accordance with their needs. The nature and level of this assistance is planned so as to ensure that refugees are neither dissuaded from repatriating for purely economic considerations nor forced by such considerations to return to areas where they fear for their safety. UNHCR will continue to reinforce its efforts to assist those who wish to repatriate even in the prevailing security situation, and to prepare for large-scale return once developments in Afghanistan allow all refugees the possibility to repatriate in safety.

11. Central to United Nations efforts to encourage the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees is the creation of conditions inside Afghanistan that would allow returnees to quickly start a new life in a country that has seen the destruction of almost every basic service and amenity.

C. Humanitarian and economic assistance programmes relating to Afghanistan

12. In paragraph 12 of its resolution 45/12, the General Assembly called upon all States to provide to the Coordinator for Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes Relating to Afghanistan adequate financial and material resources for the purposes of achieving the speedy repatriation and rehabilitation of the Afghan refugees, as well as for the economic and social reconstruction of the country.

13. In December 1990, I reluctantly agreed to the request of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan to be relieved of his responsibilities as the Coordinator of Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes Relating to Afghanistan, a post which he served with distinction since his appointment in May 1988. I would like to put on record my sincere appreciation for his tireless efforts in coordinating the emergency relief and rehabilitation programme of the United Nations system in Afghanistan, known as Operation Salam.

14. From 1 January 1991, in addition to his functions as my Personal Representative in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Mr. Benon Sevan assumed the responsibilities for the overall direction and administration of Operation Salam.

15. With no immediate end in sight to the conflict in Afghanistan, as well as with developments and compelling humanitarian needs in other parts of the world, there are signs that the international community has become increasingly immune to the war in Afghanistan and the suffering of the Afghan people who desperately need international assistance, now more than ever. Increasingly abandoned and forgotten and threatened by further reductions in humanitarian assistance, the average Afghan has understandably reached the point of despair.

16. This trend is reflected in the reduction of funding for Operation Salam, which led my Personal Representative, in June 1991, to cancel, abandon or scale down 57 projects with a total cash value of $US 31 million, in such essential fields as rehabilitation of agriculture, immunization of children, education, nutrition, the disabled and mine clearance. Even after these cuts from the original cash requirement of $US 136 million for 1991, an additional $US 26 million in cash was still required, along with substantial in-kind contributions, including 15,000 metric tons of wheat and other urgently needed food items. A substantial portion of the pledges made to Operation Salam was in the form of in-kind contributions. Regrettably, the deliveries of such pledges have lately become sporadic at best.

17. Despite the severe budgetary constraints faced by the United Nations system in Afghanistan, work by the various agencies and programmes has continued. The World Food Programme (WFP) has distributed over 60,000 MT of food commodities. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), has provided 6,800 MT of seeds and fertilizer as well as over half a

million fruit and poplar saplings. In my report to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session (A/45/635-S/21879, para. 14) I said that the serious problem of locust and sun pest, causing massive losses to farmers in the northern provinces, was being addressed and that this year it was expected that large quantities of grain could be rescued. I am pleased to be able to report that, as a result of the crop-protection measures taken, there have been significant improvements over last year's harvest. In addition, over 1 million livestock have been vaccinated during the current year, while 2,750 kilometres of irrigation channels have been rehabilitated.

18. One of the largest activities of Operation Salam concerns mine-clearance and related activities, which is administered directly by UNOCA, a special task not within the mandate of any particular United Nations agency or programme. During the first half of the current year, a further quarter of a million Afghan men, women and children received basic mine awareness training, bringing the total to over half a million since the inception of the programme. At the same time, 1,200 Afghans are employed in the United Nations-funded mine clearance programme, which concentrates on clearing mines and other unexploded ordnance from key access roads, villages, irrigation channels and agricultural land.

19. Considering the vast number of mines in Afghanistan, and the relatively limited resources available, the United Nations involvement in mine clearance is modest at best. Once peace is brought about, it is my hope that the international community will fully support the mine clearance programme for Afghanistan. Until then, however, it is essential that the current United Nations programme in mine clearance continues to receive the same level of funding: $US 18 million.

20. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continues to play a major role in many aspects of rehabilitation work. Commendable efforts are also being made by other specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations system: the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP Office for Project Services (UNDP/OPS), the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNIDCP), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV), which is involved with most of the agencies and programmes concerned.

21. Operational constraints continue to be experienced due to political uncertainties and the precarious security situation. It has often been difficult for United Nations personnel to have free access to areas to which assistance was to be provided, since they frequently need to cross zones under the control of different authorities, where aid commodities or vehicles have been hijacked, and they themselves are liable to be kidnapped. In this regard, I would like to pay a special tribute to the brave and dedicated

efforts of all United Nations personnel, as well as those of the non-governmental organizations with which the United Nations has been working very closely in bringing United Nations humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people, often at great risk to their personal safety.

22. During the current year, inter-agency cooperation has improved and there is a greater direct involvement by the agency personnel. Inter-agency cooperation was also well reflected in the response to the severe earthquake and floods which struck Afghanistan in February 1991. All agency and programme personnel participating in Operation Salam worked closely with the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO).

23. Further, during the current year, UNOCA has divested itself of all operational responsibilities which fall within the mandate of other agencies or programmes, concentrating instead on co-ordinating the activities undertaken within the United Nations system on behalf of the Secretary-General, with the exception of administering the mine-clearance programme for reasons given in paragraph 20 above. UNOCA has also streamlined its staff and has shifted its emphasis to the field. A further adjustment of staff is in progress.

24. As encouraging signs emerge on the political front, it is more essential than ever that the international community continue to sustain its efforts on the humanitarian side. Well-designed rehabilitation projects provide the Afghan people with an economically viable alternative to war, and will provide an additional impetus to the ongoing peace process. I therefore appeal to all States to commit new resources to assist the Afghan people in their hour of desperate need.

25. I welcome the fact that in their joint statement issued in Moscow, on 13 September 1991, announcing their agreement to cut off arms supplies to all Afghan sides, the Governments of the United States and the USSR have also reiterated their commitment to support an international humanitarian assistance effort to promote the prompt repatriation of refugees and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

D. Efforts towards the realization of a comprehensive political settlement

26. In my report to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session (A/45/635-S/21879, paras. 24-36), I provided an account of my efforts towards the realization of a comprehensive political settlement in Afghanistan, pursuant to my mandate under General Assembly resolution 44/15 of 1 November 1990.

27. Pursuant to paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 45/12, I further intensified my efforts to encourage all segments of the Afghan people, the two parties, the two guarantors of the Geneva Accords as well as the Governments of the neighbouring and other countries to work towards a comprehensive

political settlement in Afghanistan. I have also initiated a series of intensified consultations through my Personal Representative in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Mr. Benon Sevan, who has travelled extensively during the period under review, shuttling between the capitals concerned.

28. Since the adoption of the General Assembly resolution 45/12, I have had several discussions with the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Afghanistan, Mr. Abdul Wakil, and as recently as September 1991, with Prime Minister Fazlulhaq Khaliqyar, in New York. Mr. Sevan has maintained regular contact with the authorities in Kabul. He has continued almost on a monthly basis to hold lengthy and substantive discussions with President Najibullah, Prime Minister Fazlulhaq Khaliqyar, Foreign Minister Abdul Wakil and other senior officials of the Government. He has also maintained regular contacts with leaders of opposition groups and others inside Afghanistan, including Prof. Mohammad Asghar of the National Salvation Society.

29. In September, I had the opportunity to meet in Tehran with a joint delegation of three opposition groups, led by Prof. Sebghatullah Mojaddedi, leader of the Afghan National Liberation Front (Jabha-e-Najat-e-Melli Afghanistan), Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani, leader of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (Mahaz-Melli-Islami Afghanistan), both based in Peshawar, and Hajatoislam Rehmatullah Murtazavi, leader of the Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan (Hezb-e-Wahdat Islami Afghanistan), based in Tehran.

30. In early October, I also had a meeting in New York, with a joint delegation of opposition groups based in Peshawar and Tehran, led by Prof. Sebgatullah Mojaddedi, leader of the Afghan National Front (Jabha-e-Najat-e-Melli Afghanistan). In addition to Prof. Mojadeddi, the joint delegation included Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani, the leader of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (Mahaz-Melli-Islami Afghanistan), Maulvi Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, the leader of the Islamic Revolutionary Movement of Afghanistan (Harakat-e-Engelab-e-Islami Afghanistan), representatives from the Islamic League of Afghanistan (Jami'at-Islami Afghanistan), the Islamic Movement of Afghanistan (Harakat-e-Islami Afghanistan), the Islamic Alliance of Afghan Mujahideen (Ittehad-e-Islami-Mujahideen Afghanistan) - all based in Peshawar, Pakistan - as well as from the Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan (Hezb-e-Wahdat Islami Afghanistan), based in Tehran.

31. In addition to the above-mentioned opposition leaders, Mr. Sevan has continued his close contacts and regular consultations with other opposition leaders and groups based in Peshawar, including Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani, leader of the Islamic League of Afghanistan (Jami'at-e-Islami Afghanistan), Engineer Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of the Islamic Party of Afghanistan (Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan), Maulvi Mohammad Yunis Khalis, leader of the Islamic Party of Afghanistan (Hezb-e-Islami Afghanistan), Prof. Abdur Rab Rasool Sayyaf of the Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan (Ittehad-e-Islami Baraye Azadi Afghanistan), and Qazi Amin Waqqad, leader of the Islamic Alliance of Afghan Mujahideen (Ittehad-e-Islami Mujahideen Afghanistan), as well as with leading commanders of the resistance,

the Nationwide Council of Mujahideen Commanders, tribal and religious leaders (Ulema), as well as others.

32. Mr. Sevan has also maintained contact and consulted regularly with the former King Mohammad Zahir Shah who currently resides in Rome, as well as with a multitude of eminent Afghan personalities currently residing inside Afghanistan, in the region as well as outside the region.

33. I had the opportunity to consult in Tehran last September with President Ghulam Ishaq Khan of Pakistan. Earlier on in June, I met with the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Akram Zaki, and Chairman of the Senate, Mr. Wasim Sajat. In early October, I also had the opportunity to meet in New York with the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Muhammad Siddique Khan Kanju. Mr. Sevan has held discussions with the President, the Prime Minister, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Foreign Secretary and other senior Government officials of Pakistan on a regular basis.

34. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 45/12, I have also carried out intensive consultations with the two guarantors of the Geneva Accords. In June 1991, I had a thorough discussion on the Afghan question with the then Foreign Minister of the USSR, Mr. Aleksandr Bessmerthnyk. In September, I also discussed the situation in Afghanistan with the current Foreign Minister of the USSR, Mr. Boris B. Pankin.

35. I also held discussions on this question with the President of the United States of America, Mr. George Bush, in May and September 1991, as well as with Secretary of State, Mr. James A. Baker III, in June and in September 1991.

36. In addition to my contacts with the two guarantors and those of Mr. Sevan with the Ambassadors of the two guarantors in the region, a series of expert-level meetings have been held between my representatives and United States officials, in New York and in Washington, D.C., on a regular basis since last November. Similar meetings have also been held on a regular basis with representatives of the USSR in Moscow, New York and Geneva.

37. In September, I had the opportunity to discuss in Tehran the Afghan question with President Hashemi Rafsanjani of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, the Foreign Minister. I also had several opportunities during the period under review to discuss this question with the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Foreign Minister had previously received my Personal Representative in Tehran, in April, and in Islamabad, in June.

38. In September, I had the opportunity to discuss the Afghan question with His Majesty King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, in Jeddah. I also held consultations with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Prince Saud El-Faisal. My Personal Representative remained in close contact with other senior officials of the Government, both in Jeddah and Islamabad.

39. In September in Jeddah, I also held discussions on the Afghan question with the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), Dr. Hamid Algabid. My Personal Representative has been in close contact with the secretariat of the OIC and has held discussions with Mr. Ibrahim S. Bakr, the Assistant Secretary-General for Political, Legal and Minorities Affairs, both in Jeddah and in Islamabad.

40. The above account represents only partially the intensive discussions that I and my Personal Representative have been conducting with all parties concerned during the last 12 months.

41. In May 1991, I concluded an intensive round of consultations through my Personal Representative in Afghanistan and Pakistan. All segments of the Afghan people, including political leaders of opposition groups and resistance commanders, based in Peshawar, Tehran and inside Afghanistan, as well as prominent Afghans currently residing outside the region were consulted. The Governments concerned were also consulted.

42. After the conclusion of the above-mentioned consultations, in a statement issued on 21 May, the text of which is reproduced in annex I of the present report, I provided the following five elements which would serve as a good basis for a political settlement in Afghanistan, acceptable to the vast majority of the Afghan people:

(a) The necessity of preserving the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and non-aligned and Islamic character of Afghanistan.

(b) The recognition of the right of the Afghan people to determine their own form of government and to choose their economic, political and social system, free from outside intervention, subversion, coercion or constraint of any kind whatsoever.

(c) The need for a transition period, details of which have to be worked out and agreed upon through an intra-Afghan dialogue, leading to the establishment of a broad-based Government.

(1) The need, during that period, for transitional arrangements acceptable to the vast majority of the Afghan people, including the establishment of a credible and impartial transition mechanism with appropriate powers and authority (yet to be specified) that would enjoy the confidence of the Afghan people and provide them with the necessary assurances to participate in free and fair elections, taking into account Afghan traditions, for the establishment of a broad-based Government.

(2) The need for cessation of hostilities during the transition period.

(3) The advisability of assistance, as appropriate, of the United Nations and of any other international organization during the transition period and in the electoral process.

(d) The necessity of an agreement - to be implemented together with all agreed transitional arrangements - to end arms supplies to all Afghan sides, by all.

(e) The recognition of the need for adequate financial and material resources to alleviate the hardship of the Afghan refugees and the creation of the necessary conditions for their voluntary repatriation, as well as for the economic and social reconstruction of Afghanistan.

43. In June 1991, I held in New York a series of bilateral meetings with the representatives of the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United States of America and the USSR. All the Governments concerned expressed their support for my efforts, welcomed the statement made on 21 May, and reiterated their commitment to a political settlement of the Afghan question. I have continued my contacts with all the Governments concerned, both personally and through my Personal Representative.

44. The Government of the Republic of Afghanistan as well as other Governments concerned have also supported my statement of 21 May 1991.

45. In a statement issued on 11 June 1991, the European Community and its 12 Member States have welcomed and expressed their support for my sustained efforts to achieve an overall political settlement (A/46/258).

46. I am satisfied that the vast majority of the Afghan opposition leaders, groups and eminent Afghan personalities as well as others have stated their support for my efforts and in particular for my statement of 21 May 1991. They have accepted that the five elements contained in my statement would serve as a good basis for a political settlement in Afghanistan, acceptable to the vast majority of the Afghan people.

47. I have impressed on all my interlocutors that whatever the process to attain a settlement, it should be a strictly Afghan process, free from foreign interference.

48. From 28 to 30 July and from 28 to 29 August 1991, in Islamabad and Tehran, respectively, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mr. Akram Zaki, and leaders of Afghan resistance parties based in Peshawar and Tehran held tripartite talks on Afghanistan. In the Joint Declaration issued on 30 July at the end of the first round of the tripartite meetings, the participants "recognized the positive elements in the five-point statement by the United Nations Secretary-General. The statement could serve as a possible basis for a settlement for the Afghanistan problem. Therefore, the statement could be further studied and, after necessary clarifications, could be considered for a comprehensive solution acceptable to the people of Afghanistan."

49. In its resolution on Afghanistan, the Twentieth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Istanbul from 4 to 8 August 1991, noted "with appreciation the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General, including his latest initiative of 21 May 1991, to promote a comprehensive political settlement, which also envisages a role for other international organizations including the OIC". Further, it requested the OIC Secretary-General to coordinate his efforts with the United Nations Secretary-General for promoting a political settlement in Afghanistan and recommended that the OIC have an active role in the solution of the Afghanistan problem.

50. The Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Accra, from 2 to 7 September 1991, welcomed the efforts of the parties concerned aimed at a peaceful solution of the Afghan question and called for a comprehensive political settlement in accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/12. Further, the Non-Aligned Movement expressed "support for United Nations Secretary-General's proposals contained in his statement of 21 May 1991 for a political solution in Afghanistan".

E. Observations

51. I have repeatedly stated that there is no alternative to a political solution. Durable peace in Afghanistan can be achieved only through a political settlement. All concerned parties need to exercise restraint and avoid further escalation of the fighting at this crucial time in order not to undermine the political process.

52. Immediately after the joint statement made in Moscow on 13 September 1991, I welcomed the agreement reached between the Governments of the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to discontinue their weapons deliveries to all Afghan sides, effective 1 January 1991. The two Governments agreed that a cessation of hostilities was essential for the peaceful conduct of elections during the transition period and for a lasting political settlement. To facilitate this cessation, they agreed to discontinue their weapons deliveries to all Afghan sides. They also agreed that a cease-fire and cut-off of weapons deliveries from all other sources should follow this step. They agreed further to work towards withdrawal of major weapons systems from Afghanistan.

53. The decision taken by the two Governments will give impetus to the current efforts aimed at achieving a political solution. I also welcome the reaffirmation by the two Governments of their willingness to promote in every way possible the efforts of the Secretary-General to contribute in practical ways to the early settlement of this conflict.

54. The above decision represents a major contribution towards implementing one of the key provisions of my statement of 21 May. I urge all other Governments concerned to take urgently similar decisions and halt not only the supply of arms, but also stop financing the purchase of arms.

55. I appeal to all Governments concerned to promote the unity of the Afghan people, and encourage them to demonstrate the necessary flexibility essential for a political settlement. I regret to note that interference in the internal affairs of the Afghan people continues to be exerted by some elements who still pursue a military option, despite the support given by the Governments concerned for my 21 May statement. The pursuit of the military option will only bring increased suffering and will have serious consequences, not only for the Afghan people, but for the neighbouring countries as well. All the Governments concerned have therefore a major responsibility to prevent the active pursuit of such goals.

56. I believe that the credible and impartial transition mechanism referred to in my statement of 21 May should have the appropriate powers and authority to guarantee the unity, safety and security of the Afghan people, the territorial integrity of Afghanistan, and should be able to organize and conduct free and fair elections. Appropriate international guarantees should be provided in order to enable the transition mechanism to carry out its tasks.

57. I further believe that all powers and all executive authority should be transferred to the transition mechanism as of the first day of the transition period. What is essential is to ensure an orderly transfer of power.

58. In order to bring about a political settlement, it is necessary that all segments of the Afghan people feel that their concerns are addressed. I fully appreciate the fact that after 13 years of a very bitter war, not a single Afghan family remains untouched by that tragedy. As a result there are strong feelings against the participation of certain personalities and groups in an intra-Afghan dialogue or during the transition period and its mechanism. I remain confident, however, that ways and means can be found of satisfying all concerned. A dialogue can be organized in various manners, direct or indirect, with the participation of Afghans who would be acceptable to all sides. Nevertheless, if a political settlement is to be brought about, there is no alternative to such a dialogue.

59. I have been given assurances that some of the controversial personalities concerned would not insist on their personal participation, either in the intra-Afghan dialogue or in the transition mechanism. They would be willing to relinquish their posts, should certain questions pertaining to participation in the intra-Afghan dialogue and the transition mechanism be resolved.

60. I believe that at this stage, as difficult as it may be, we should set aside the question of personalities or their participation, and resolve first the difficulties involved in organizing an Afghan gathering with a wider participation, as well as define the structure and powers of the transition mechanism. I believe that all other questions can be resolved in that context, given the assurances I have received recently.

61. What is essential now in Afghanistan is not only to refrain from escalating the fighting, but also to find ways of bringing about a pause in

the fighting in order to help accelerate the peace process. It is also essential that all aspects of the Afghan question are addressed and that concrete confidence building steps are taken by all sides.

62. There are many Afghan political prisoners as well as prisoners of war. There is also a number of other prisoners of war - Soviet citizens and others - still in captivity. This issue must be addressed urgently, particularly for humanitarian reasons. I appeal to all those holding prisoners to provide information thereon either to the International Committee of the Red Cross or to the United Nations. My appeal goes to the Government of the Republic of Afghanistan, to the leaders of the resistance and all others concerned, so that the families of the prisoners may be informed. The prisoners should be given the choice of staying where they are, to return to their homes or go to a third country. No prisoner of war should be used as a pawn for bargaining; they should be treated humanely in accordance with international law governing the treatment of prisoners of war. I would also like to appeal to all Governments to use whatever influence they may have with the parties concerned and encourage them in this direction. I therefore appeal for the release of all political prisoners as well as all prisoners of war on humanitarian grounds. Such a step is essential for the achievement of a comprehensive political settlement.

63. The question of Afghanistan has reached a critical stage. We now have, however, a unique opportunity to resolve the Afghan question. It is incumbent on all the Governments concerned to ensure that further bloodshed be avoided by all means. All Afghans must be persuaded to refrain from an escalation of the military conflict and to avoid a power vacuum in Afghanistan. What is essential is to form a transition mechanism to which all powers and all executive authority could be transferred in an orderly manner. I therefore appeal to all Afghan leaders to place the interests of the Afghan people above all other interests and, if need be, to be ready to make the ultimate personal sacrifice and not become an obstacle to the achievement of a durable political settlement. I also appeal to all Governments concerned to support the political process and respect the right of the Afghan people to decide their own future.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the Security Council, Forty-third Year, Supplement for April, May and June 1988, document S/19835, annex I.

ANNEX

Text of statement made by the Secretary-General
on 21 May 1991

Reports of active hostilities in Afghanistan over the last few weeks have reconfirmed my concern that further efforts are needed to bring about an end to the suffering of the Afghan population. At a time when other developments seem to be attracting the attention of the world, the Afghans have become a forgotten people. Their plight unfortunately is very real and the urgency to put an end to it is no less felt today at a time when the international community is showing a growing determination to assist in the alleviation of human suffering.

In pursuance of the mandate entrusted to me by the General Assembly in its resolution 45/12 of 7 November 1990, I have persevered in encouraging all segments of the Afghan people, as well as the Governments concerned, to work towards a comprehensive political settlement in Afghanistan.

I have on several occasions reiterated that the question of Afghanistan cannot be solved except by political means, and that to achieve such a settlement, a consensus is needed both at the international and national levels.

I have just concluded an intensive round of consultations, through my Personal Representative in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Benon Sevan, with all segments of the Afghan people, including political leaders of opposition groups and resistance commanders, based in Peshawar, Tehran and inside Afghanistan, as well as with prominent Afghans currently residing outside the region. The Governments concerned have also been consulted.

I have impressed on all my interlocutors that whatever the process to attain a settlement, it should be a strictly Afghan political process, free from foreign interference.

Encouraged as I am by the views expressed, I believe that the following elements would serves as a good basis for a political settlement in Afghanistan, acceptable to the vast majority of the Afghan people:

1. The necessity of preserving the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and non-aligned and Islamic character of Afghanistan.

2. The recognition of the right of the Afghan people to determine their own form of Government and to choose their economic, political and social system, free from outside intervention, subversion, coercion or constraint of any kind whatsoever.

3. The need for a transition period, details of which have to be worked out and agreed upon through an intra-Afghan dialogue, leading to the establishment of a broad-based Government.

   a. The need, during that period, for transitional arrangements acceptable to the vast majority of the Afghan people, including the establishment of a credible and impartial transition mechanism with appropriate powers and authority (yet to be specified) that would enjoy the confidence of the Afghan people and provide them with the necessary assurances to participate in free and fair elections, taking into account Afghan traditions, for the establishment of a broad-based Government.

   b. The need for cessation of hostilities during the transition period.

   c. The advisability of assistance, as appropriate, of the United Nations and of any other international organization during the transition period and in the electoral process.

4. The necessity of an agreement - to be implemented together with all agreed transitional arrangements - to end arms supplies to all Afghan sides, by all.

5. The recognition of the need for adequate financial and material resources to alleviate the hardship of the Afghan refugees and the creation of the necessary conditions for their voluntary repatriation, as well as for the economic and social reconstruction of Afghanistan.

It is my intention to continue my discussions with all concerned in order to encourage and facilitate the working out of the details of the above elements.

I appeal to all Afghan leaders to put the interest of the Afghan people above all other interest, and resolve their differences through a political process, bringing to an end the long and devastating war.

I also call upon all Governments concerned to support the political process, and respect the right of the Afghan people to decide their own future.